

Japan's Mandate In The Southwestern Pacific

It is common knowledge that the probability of strong air and naval bases in Japan's mandated islands in the Southwestern Pacific has prevented the United States from sending reinforcements by a direct route to either the Philippines or the Dutch East Indies. It has been obvious that it eventually would be necessary to destroy any enemy strong points in those islands and establish bases there ourselves before launching any all-out campaign to control the Southwestern Pacific or to destroy the Japanese Fleet. It also has been obvious that the United States Navy would play a predominant role in any such operations, of which the attacks on various points in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands on January 31 was the first. As our Navy in the future undoubtedly will operate extensively around Japan's mandated islands and may be given the responsibility of administering such islands as are captured until after the war is over, let us prepare now for the future by becoming as fully acquainted as possible with the geography and history of that area.

The islands over which Japan acquired a mandate at the end of the First World War are divided into three different groups, the Marianas, the Caroline Islands, and the Marshall Islands. Of these the Palau Islands, in the Carolines, are the most westerly, lying only 500 miles from the island of Mindanao in the Philippines and having a total land area of 173 square miles. The Carolines is the central and the largest group of the mandated islands, stretching 1,400 miles in an east and west direction, with a total land area of 560 square miles. All of the islands of the group lie approximately on the same latitude line of 8° North. Rising in a vertical chain to the northward of and almost at the center of the Carolines, is the second group of islands, the Marianas. The most southerly island of the group is about 250 miles north of

the Carolines and the most northerly about 900 miles south of Yokohama. The Marianas, with a total land area of 250 miles, is the second largest of the groups, and with the Ogasawana Islands form a chain of islands from the Carolines to Japan proper. Twelve hundred miles to the east of the Marianas and 1,980 miles from Honolulu, lying across the Carolines like the cap of a T, is the Marshalls, the smallest of the three groups of islands, having a total land area of only 150 square miles. The Marshalls consists of two parallel chains of islands, the Ralicks and the Radacks, each approximately 600 miles in length.

As can be seen from the foregoing, the total land area of the islands is small compared to the sea area which they cover. Not only is the total land area small, but most of the islands are small as well. How small most of them are is evident from the fact that, although the total land area is only 960 square miles, there are approximately 1,400 islands in the Mandate. Some of the islands are of appreciable size, however, the largest of which are as follows: Ponape, in the Carolines, with an area of 145 square miles; Saipan, in the Marianas, with an area of 71 square miles; Yap, in the Carolines, with an area of 83 square miles; Baheldaob, in the Palaus, with an area of 143 square miles; Rota, in the Marianas, with an area of 48 square miles; Kusaie, in the Marianas, with an area of 45 square miles; and Tinian with an area of 32 square miles.

As far as the Western world is concerned, the first of the Mandated islands was discovered in the year 1521. It was on March the sixth of that year that Magellan sighted Rota and Guam, both of the Mariana group. Approximately 200 years later two sailing ships of the East India Company, under the commands of Captain Gilbert and Captain Marshall, discovered islands in what is now known as the Gilbert group and the Marshall group. By 1824 all of the islands in the Marshalls had been discovered and various islands had shown promise as whaling centers and sources of copra. In 1864, a German

firm from Hawaii began the first business enterprise in the islands by opening an office in Ebon Islands, in the Marshalls, for the exportation of copra. Other German firms followed in opening offices in the islands, as a result of which Germany became the leading nation in the commercial developments in the island. Thus there were three principal powers vying for control of what was to be the Japanese Mandated Islands: Germany, England, and Spain. By 1885 this contest for control of the islands had assumed the proportion of an international issue of importance. On August 26 of that year, Spain ordered two warships to Yap to proclaim possession of the island. Germany, having learned of Spain's plans, rushed a gunboat there in an attempt to take possession of the islands first. This she succeeded in doing and when the Spanish warships arrived at Yap, they found that the German gunboat had reached there the evening before and had proclaimed sovereignty over Palau, Yap, Oleai, Truk, Pingelap, Kusaie, and Ponape. In order to avoid an armed conflict, Spain referred the case to Pope Leo XIII who decreed that Spain should have the right to the Caroline, Mariana, and Palau islands provided she accepted the responsibility of maintaining an orderly form of government in the islands, guaranteed full protection to Western merchants, assured the German people complete freedom of trade as well as the right to establish fisheries and settlements there, and permitted the German Navy to call at any port and to have coaling stations in the islands. Both England and Germany agreed to these terms, settling for the time being the dispute over three of the five groups of islands involved. In April, 1886, England and Germany arrived at an understanding confirming the right of the former to the Gilbert Islands and of the latter to the Marshall Islands. In all outward appearances, the problems of the Southwestern Pacific had been settled to the satisfaction of all concerned. The appearances were only outward, however. The same methods of colonial administration that finally drove Cuba and the Philippines into revolt, aroused the natives of the Carolines and Marianas. At Ponape, the natives, angered

over the removal of the ruling chieftain from the islands by force, destroyed the Spanish settlement and killed the governor-general. Spain sent an army and warships to Ponape which only added to the friction and the islands were entering a state of utter disorder when the Spanish-American War broke out. Shortly after the United States took control of Guam and the Philippines, Germany bought all the islands that had remained under Spanish sovereignty and thus became the principal power in Micronesia. She immediately began the economic and commercial development of the islands and by 1906 had laid out coconut plantations throughout the islands, discovered large deposits of guano phosphate on Angaur Island, and established a telegraph company between Yap and Menado in the Dutch Celebes, Yap and Guam, and Yap and Shanghai. While in the midst of these developments the World War broke out and shortly thereafter, in October, 1914, a Japanese naval squadron took possession of all the islands in the Caroline, Mariana, and Marshall groups, with the exception of Guam, which Japan naturally made no attempt to take.

In March, 1917, in accordance with a secret understanding, Japan obtained British recognition of her occupation of the former German islands. At the Peace Conference, Japan asked for complete annexation of the islands but, under the leadership of Woodrow Wilson, it was decided that all those territories which had come into the possession of the Allies as a result of the war, and which were not able to govern themselves under modern world conditions, should be placed under the administration of some advanced nation appointed by the League of Nations, to be known as mandated territories. It was this policy that enabled Japan to gain control of what has since been known as the Japanese Mandated Islands of the Pacific.

Although Japan did not control the Mandated Islands until the World War, her interests in them originated at least 30 years before. According to authentic record, a Japanese warship touched Kusaie, one of the islands in

the Mariana Group, in 1884. In 1890, Japan established commercial relations with some of the Spanish and German firms in the islands, and prior to the purchase of the islands by Germany had begun to gain control of the copra and fishing industries. This control she lost after Germany purchased the islands, due to the expansion of German interests and German discrimination against the Japanese. Naturally, the discrimination was reversed in 1914 when the Japanese took control. Upon the establishment of her mandate over the islands, Japan organized the South Seas Development Company and the South Seas Trading Company with private and government funds to develop the resources of the islands. Sugar, coconut, and rice plantations were developed, the fishing and phosphate industries increased, and shipping routes established. Japanese laborers were brought to the islands in great numbers and extensive harbor works undertaken. As a result of these efforts Japanese fishermen began operating as far south as the northern coast of Australia; Saipan, Tinian, and Rota became centers of the sugar industry; large phosphate mines were established on the island of Angaur, Pelilin, Feys, Togobei, Sonsol, and Peal; and large harbor works were undertaken at Tanapak, in Saipan, and at Marakal, in Palau.

In their efforts to develop the agricultural resources of the islands, the Japanese have been seriously handicapped by the scarcity of alluvial soil and the rainfalls which, although heavy, run off rapidly and leave a frequent absence of permanent water. These rainfalls are particularly excessive on Ponape and render it unfit for sugar-cane cultivation. Then, too, there is the tropical climate, with an average temperature of 86°F. which varies little throughout the year, although constant sea breezes and frequent squalls help to moderate the heat of the day. Because of these poor agricultural conditions, the principal diet of the natives in the islands has long been yam, bread, fruit, and taro. With poor pasturage, there is little cattle breeding and fish is the principal meat consumed by the natives.

Because of the lack of variety in their diet, as well as because of the enervating climate and the lack of sanitation, the natives have a very low resistance to disease. A large percentage of them have tuberculosis and amoebic dysentery is very prevalent. The Japanese have done much to improve these conditions by establishing medical centers throughout the islands, with competent Japanese doctors in charge. The diseases against which the Japanese have had to wage their greatest battle, however, are gonorrhea, syphilis, and frambesia. In his book entitled *Pacific Islands under Japanese Mandate*, Yanaihara claims that, in 1933, 33 per cent of the natives of Yap had gonorrhea and almost all of the native adults had syphilis or frambesia, the latter being a much discussed tropical skin disease (sometimes called yaws) which is akin to syphilis.

It is said that, at the time of Magellan's discovery of the islands, there were 300,000 natives living in Micronesia. Due to the climate, living conditions, backward social systems, and wholesale massacres by invaders, this number now has decreased to a mere 52,000. This meager native population, however, is augmented by a large Japanese population which, since 1920, has grown from 51,000 to 103,000 in 1933. The greatest increase in the Japanese population has been in the Saipan area, the center of the sugar-cane developments, an industry for which the backward and unskilled natives were found to be entirely unsuited. Fishing, too, has remained largely a Japanese enterprise, so that the phosphate and copra industries are the only ones using native labor to any extent. As other nationalities have been prohibited absolutely from establishing themselves on any of the islands under the Japanese mandate, the Japanese and the natives are the only two elements of the population in the islands. This ban against other nationalities has been enforced with particular care in the shipping industry. All shipping facilities are in Japanese hands, insuring them of almost exclusive knowledge of the waters surrounding the islands. Visits

of foreign vessels were always discouraged, and since 1935 they have been forbidden. Likewise, the visiting by representatives of foreign countries have been banned in recent years, as well as the flying of foreign planes over the mandated area. In this manner, Japan has been able to fortify the islands, in direct violation of the articles of the mandate promulgated by the League of Nations, without the violation being proved. It has long been suspected that she was fortifying certain of the islands, but to every query concerning the matter she naturally replied that the accusations were false.

Prior to the acquisition of the islands by Spain, each island or group of islands was ruled by a native chieftain known as a "Great Chief." That, of course, is now changed. The Mandate has a Japanese governor, who rules the islands in accordance with Imperial Ordinances. To control local administration where many Japanese reside, a village or town council is appointed from among the Japanese residences. To let the natives share in the administration, village chiefs or deputies are selected whose duties are generally confined to informing the villagers of the latest orders and rules and to reporting to the local director the births and deaths among the natives and in some cases village chiefs are permitted to appoint a village policeman and a village secretary as assistants.

The judicial authority of the Governor is limited to imposing sentences of imprisonment or detention for periods not to exceed a year, although under special circumstances these limitations may be exceeded. In addition, there are local courts and a Higher Court to assist in enforcing the law. The local courts are located at Palau, Saipan, and Ponape, and the Higher Court at Palau. On islands where no court is established, the local director is empowered to deal with certain civil cases and minor criminal cases. Most of the cases brought before the courts involve the Japanese. Little trouble is experienced with the natives.

If the islands are taken over during the war, it again will be the Japanese element that will cause most of the trouble. The native element is too passive by nature, too lacking in energy, and too used to sudden changes in their government to cause any real disturbance as long as they, themselves, are receiving decent treatment. No imports other than cloth for clothes, and a few building supplies will be essential to their welfare; and the economic hardships that some of them may be experiencing as a result of the war can be easily eliminated. The fifth column activities and economic needs of the Japanese in the islands are going to be the big problems to be solved.

Of these two problems, the prevention of fifth column work should get first attention to prevent a repetition of the experience at Pearl Harbor, where a large resident population of Japanese around vital naval and air bases made it impossible to keep any of our operations secret.